The Newsletter of the Queen Anne Historical Society, Seattle, WA

Queen Anne Cobblestone

DECEMBER, 2011

Membership Meeting Features Historic Barns of Washington

Set Your Calendar: Thursday January 26, 7 pm

Chris Moore of the **Washington Trust for Historic Preservation** explores Washington's historic barns at our January 26 meeting (7:00 p.m. Seattle Church of Christ, 2555 8th Ave. W.) The barns on our historical landscape have symbolized progress and industriousness – working lands need working buildings. In recent decades, the role of barns as viable components of active farming operations has been diminished. Increasingly, barns serve as a romantic and picturesque reminder of our agrarian past, but their continued presence is tenuous. Saving the beautiful historic barns that embody our agricultural and rural heritage is an important part of the trust's work. Chris will share his vast knowledge of our historic barns while Jennifer Meisner, the trust's executive director, will discuss the organization role in protecting and preserving our barns and other landmarks statewide.
Light refreshments to follow.

Historic Barn
(Photo courtesy of WA Trust for Historic Preservation)

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Kim's Musings...1962 Seattle World's Fair

By Kim Turner

The recent public program of our society brought back many memories for me, some related to the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, some to the years prior to the fair. I remember first hearing about the forthcoming landscape changes when it was announced that the Warren Avenue School would be demolished, along with the many other buildings within the boundaries set for the exposition. Apartments, neighborhood groceries, single-family dwellings, the fire station at Broad and Fifth Avenue North, all would go. So there was a final farewell to Warren Avenue Grade School in May, 1959, well-attended by many former students and those teachers who were still at the school. The main hall was packed, and there were many teary-eyed attendees. Afterward, the books which had been in the school libraries were set in bins outside on the grounds, to be recycled into landfill. One of the books which I would like to have obtained (but didn't) was a massive table size book published in the late 1920's with wonderful pictures of dinosaurs. I don't know what happened to it, but apparently someone else got it – we got word of the books' fate from a neighbor who had been down there. My sister and I walked down from our house on Sixth North all the way over to the school, not thinking to bring bags with which to take any of the items, but both of us drew a number of fascinating books from the dustbins, and we went merrily home with our prizes. I remember my sister got a three volume set of art drawing books which dealt mainly with colors in art. Such was the order of the day.

Later on, I was glad that we had joined with a number of others doing the same thing, as much of what was in the bins did eventually go into the Montlake Fill.

The Fair: we had purchased several of the ticket books prior to the opening day, and my sister was our sole representative that day – I was at work at the downtown library; Mom was fighting a spring cold, and the weather was a very typical rainy April day. During the course of the construction of the Fair buildings, my sister was down there with a camera, taking photos of things she felt should be noted. It wasn't enough that we were living on Ward Street from mid-1959 through 1980, and so saw everything going up without having to leave the house. But now I am glad of her care at taking pictures. They are a part of our history, as much as neighborhood changes always are. (This is the first part of a continuing series of World's Fair Musings to be published through 2012). Very Happy Holidays to everyone in the Queen Anne Historical Society and to your families and friends!

The Willcox Walls: A Historical Perspective

THE QUEEN ANNE WILLCOX WALLS (PHOTO BY LAWRENCE KREISMAN)

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

THE MISSION OF THE QUEEN ANNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS TO RECORD AND PRESERVE, IN PERMANENT FORM, THE HISTORY OF THE SETTLING OF THE QUEEN ANNE COMMUNITY IN SEATTLE, WA AND TO DEVELOP WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AN APPRECIATION AND CONCERN FOR ITS HISTORY AND ITS HISTORICAL SITES.

By Jan Hadley

While strolling by the Willcox Walls, enjoying the dramatic views of Puget Sound, the Olympics, and boat traffic, have you ever wondered about the history of this iconic Queen Anne landmark? You may be interested in knowing that the Willcox Walls will soon mark their first century since construction. The Willcox Walls are the retaining walls made of reinforced concrete and decorative brick that run along Eighth Place West and Eighth Avenue West, separating their upper and lower portions. They begin at Marshall Viewpoint, at the intersection of West Highland Drive, Seventh Avenue West, and Eighth Place West. A second section of the Willcox Walls is located along Seventh Avenue West, separating the upper and lower portions of Seventh Avenue West.

Construction of the Willcox Walls began in 1913 and was completed in January 1916. The Walls have withstood earthquakes, flooding, and other forces of nature, adding beauty to Queen Anne Boulevard

The Willcox Walls, including the design of their ornamental balustrades, lighting, and public stairways, are the work of Walter Ross Baume (W.R. B.) Willcox. Willcox was born in Burlington, Vermont, and studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Pennsylvania, and Drexel University. He worked in Vermont and elsewhere in the East before moving to Seattle in 1907. He was personally acquainted with Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, and their philosophies influenced his designs and thinking. At his office in Seattle, he worked on more than sixty projects, including the design of the Firmin Michel Beef Corporation Building at the Alaska Yukon-Pacific Exposition (no longer standing) and the

THE QUEEN ANNE WILLCOX WALLS (PHOTO BY PAUL DORPAT)

design of the Arboretum Aqueduct. In 1910, he was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, one of the first architects in Washington State to achieve this distinction. He left Seattle in 1922 to become chair of the School of Architecture at the University of Oregon, and he remained in Eugene, Oregon until his death in 1947.

The Arboretum Aqueduct in Washington Park, designed by Willcox in 1911, is also made of reinforced concrete with decorative brickwork. *Seattle Now & Then*, published by Paul Dorpat, called the Arboretum Aqueduct, "one sturdy bridge" when in 2008 it took a direct hit from a bus traveling though its arch. While the top of the bus, which was almost three feet taller than the 9-foot high arch, was sheered off, the arch itself was barely chipped.

ARBORETUM AQUEDUCT (PHOTO COURTESY OF PEMCO WEBSTER & STEVENS COLLECTION, MOHAI)

The Willcox Walls were designated a City Landmark in 1976, recognized for their structural detail, brick work, exterior appearance, and lighting fixtures. In 1989, after nearby residents complained of deterioration and damaged and missing light fixtures, the City began renovations and repairs to the Eighth West section of the Walls. The work included replacing missing, broken, or cracked bricks; removing rust from reinforcing bar; patching mortar; and restoring the more than sixty light standards along the Walls. Cast aluminum reproductions were made in order to replicate, as closely as possible, their original design, ornamentation, and detail.

The Willcox Walls are a treasured landmark. With this architectural gem, W.R.B. Wilcox left a legacy that we can enjoy for years to come.

Then and Now on Queen Anne: The Uptown Theater

By Michael Herschensohn
(article originally appeared in the Queen Anne News)

The Uptown Theater has been a neighborhood anchor since 6:30 on the evening of Wednesday, May 26, 1926 when the 749-seat silent movie house opened. Today, the building contributes significantly to the historic fabric of our Queen Anne community.

The theater is the work of Victor W. Voorhees, one of Seattle's most prolific architects of the first half the 20th century and who, like most of Seattle's early designers, had no training in architecture. This 749 seat black box theater had plenty of room for an orchestra, a piano player or other musical accompanists of the era and giant 35mm projectors whose lamps generated so much heat that they had to be vented through the roof.

Uptown Theater 1937
(Photo courtesy of Puget Sound Regional Archives)

That booming 1920's epoch we remember for its flappers, Charleston dance and bathtub gin sometimes makes us overlook that Seattleites were rooted in their neighborhoods where multiple taverns, social clubs and movie houses entertained local residents. Our neighborhood had the Uptown in lower Queen Anne and the Queen Anne Theater (originally the Cheerio) on the top of the hill where the Gilbert Apartments are now. The Cheerio borrowed the Queen Anne name in the late 1920s following the demolition of the 1911 theater located at Boston and Queen Anne Avenue.

Of nearby neighborhood theaters, only Magnolia's 34th Ave West is gone. Ballard's Bay, West Seattle's Admiral, the University District's Varsity and Neptune along with Wallingford's Guild and 45th all survive. In the good old days before TV, Seattle neighborhoods coalesced around going to the movies, and every kid spent wintry Saturday afternoons at double features at places like Ballard's Bay, West Seattle's Admiral, or the Varsity and Neptune in the University District.

John Hamrick built the Uptown which was his fifth Pacific Northwest film venue.
He opened the cinema with a flourish showing *The Sea Beast,* starring John Barrymore and (his wife) Delores Costello, but not before Carl Weber's live orchestra played John Philip Souza's *The Stars and Stripes Forever.*

Architect Voorhees designed a rather simple building with grand and somewhat Baroque scrolls flanking the second story windows. A row of four windows now hidden behind the 1953 marquee by B. Marcus Priteca (the West Coast's most important early 20th c. movie house designer) were the façade's most prominent feature. Visitors today see no signs of the second story toilets, the waiting room behind those four windows, or the barbershop once located on the south edge of the modern ticket booth.

In 1984, the restaurant on the corner of Republican and First North (hey, do you remember Tony's Italian Restaurant or it's more famous successor Le Tastevin?) was demolished and replaced by two additional theaters with 473 seats. The southern and eastern façades were preserved and now serve as a sheltered place where moviegoers queue

Uptown Theater 1954
(Photo courtesy of Puget Sound Regional Archives)

up. At the same time, architect Voorhees's original theater shrank by some 234 places making room for a bigger lobby, lobby level bathrooms and a candy and popcorn counter.

The Uptown is one of many American movie houses around the country bearing the name. Here in our Queen Anne neighborhood, the theater shares its name with the commercial district it anchors. It is yet one more signal of the theater's importance and why its preservation is really quite wonderful.

Uptown Theater 2011
(Photo by author)

Today, dressed up with fantastically restored neon lights, a new paint job and some deep, deep cleaning, the Uptown reenters our neighborhood's life under the daring leadership of the Seattle International Film Festival (SIFF). SIFF not only produces the largest and best film festival in the world, but also is now dazzling us with a panoply of super year-round programs at the Uptown and in its new headquarters in the Film Center, the former Alki Room located on the Seattle Center campus at the corner of 2nd Ave N. and August Wilson Way (formerly Republican Street).

Over and over again we see not-for-profit cultural organizations giving new life to our historic commercial districts. SIFF's work at the Uptown, supported in part by the Queen Anne Historical Society (yet another not-for-profit cultural organization making things happen in historic Queen Anne) is a striking example.

As the Uptown flourishes, so will the neighborhood around it!